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Summary record of the 2516th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 19 March 2008, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Rivas Posada

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08-27643 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 40 of the Covenant (*continued*)

Initial report of Botswana (*continued*)
(CCPR/C/BWA/1; CCPR/C/BWA/Q/1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the members of the delegation of Botswana took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Mr. Khalil**, referring to the fairly low number of commutations from death sentence to life imprisonment, requested more information on the death penalty and the law of commutation. It was important that the work of the Advisory Committee on the Prerogative of Mercy be transparent in view of the fact (CCPR/C/BWA/1, para. 147) that many poor accused persons did not have the means to pay for legal counsel and did not receive the assistance to which they were entitled under article 14 of the Covenant.

3. Turning to Botswana's reservation to article 7 of the Covenant, he expressed the hope that the delegation, on its return home, would explain the importance attached by the Committee to serious consideration of the withdrawal of that reservation. In 2005, the African Union Mission had also raised the issue of corporal punishment, expressing the view that it was degrading and inhumane. Corporal punishment was also a violation of article 10 of the Covenant. Surprisingly, officials had sought to justify it, arguing that it was more effective than imprisonment and that many people in fact preferred it to imprisonment. Community service, an alternative suggested by the African Union, had been tried but had failed because there were not enough officials to supervise offenders. He urged the authorities to address the lack of supervision.

4. Turning to question 9, he welcomed the Government's intention to provide statistics on complaints of torture and ill treatment by police and prison staff in the not too distant future. Referring to paragraph 178 of the report, he said that the mechanism for "normally" interviewing arrested persons did not seem to be adequate. There should be a clearer and more effective mechanism for investigating allegations of torture under any circumstances. It was not made clear (para. 185) how or to whom alleged victims of torture could make their complaints while in custody and who would be authorized to conduct the investigation in such cases. The composition of the investigating team was not specified. If the police were implicated in such accusations, he wondered whether there would be police officers in the team and if so, how the investigation could be independent.

5. According to paragraph 158 of the report, torture was not an offence as such, but the elements leading to it were offences. He asked whether the State Party would consider adopting the definition of torture set in the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

6. Turning to question 11, he wondered why not all requests to visit prisoners made by NGOs were granted. Referring to paragraph 221 of the report, he wondered what measures had been taken to clear the serious backlog of cases that prevented many cases from being heard within a reasonable time.

7. Turning to question 12, he wondered what measures were being taken to deal with prison overcrowding, apart from building new prisons, which was not necessarily the best solution. Releasing prisoners on bail was another way of reducing overcrowding.

8. With regard to question 13 on the list of issues, while he could understand the reasons given by the Minister for the measures taken, he reiterated the Committee's view that the secrecy surrounding the date of execution and place of burial had the effect of punishing the families of the executed persons and constituted inhumane treatment.

9. **Ms. Palm** thanked the delegation for its comprehensive report but noted that it mainly covered legislation rather than everyday practice. With respect to question 10, she welcomed the adoption of the Bill on Domestic Violence, which had previously been considered a private matter; often no action had been taken to protect the victims of domestic violence, who were mainly women. However, she would like to have more information on the content of the Bill and on the incidence of domestic violence in Botswana. Presumably the Bill had been introduced because domestic violence was considered a serious problem, as it was in most countries.

10. There seemed to be a growing awareness of violence against women and measures taken by the police included paying more attention to threats made by partners. She would welcome more information on

any concrete steps, other than legislation, being taken to prevent domestic violence and provide help and redress to victims. The Committee would also welcome a copy of the Domestic Violence Bill.

11. **Mr. Amor** asked about the rank of the Covenant in the legal system of Botswana. The delegation should also explain the relationship between domestic and international law and, more specifically, domestic law and international human rights law. He had been concerned to learn from the report that customary law, (para. 62) was a function of patterns of behaviour within a particular community, which could make the integration of international conventions into the Customary Courts difficult. The Covenant had to be applied regardless of national structures or cultural practices, and the State had to ensure that it took precedence over domestic law. He looked forward to receiving more information from the delegation with regard to the compatibility of customary law with the Covenant.

12. He wished to know what initiatives or actions had been taken by Botswana to prevent and eradicate ritual murder. There was no possible justification for such murders and he would welcome more information on the sociological context, the attitude of the State and existing sanctions and preventive measures.

13. **Mr. Lallah** expressed concern about the application of article 14 of the Covenant regarding the right to a fair trial and sought clarification regarding the jurisdiction of customary courts. He wished to know whether customary courts could impose heavy fines or send people to prison and whether there was a limit to their competence in such matters.

14. He was perplexed by the application of fundamental human rights provisions regarding the equality of rights of men and women. Referring to sections 3 and 15 of the Constitution, which dealt with non-discrimination, he asked whether the term "person" included both men and women, as the provisions referred only to "he", and whether women were in fact considered non-persons, since a number of provisions seemed to allow the State to make discriminatory laws. He wondered how the courts in Botswana had interpreted those two provisions. He also asked whether a woman could be President of Botswana, and whether women could be included in the House of Chiefs, and if so, how many women were chiefs. As the House of Chiefs had important powers regarding the designation, recognition and removal of powers of chiefs and the administration of customary courts, customary law, tribal organization and tribal property, it was very important that women not be excluded.

15. Paragraphs 49 and 51 of the report referred to the courts and the Judicial Service Commission. The Chief Justice, who was President of the High Court, seemed to have a higher status than the President of the Court of Appeal in view of the order in which they were listed. He wondered who had priority in practice as it seemed unusual that the judge who would decide on an appeal against a High Court judgement was not senior to the judge of that court.

16. **Ms. Wedgwood** said she assumed that women's guardianship was only a customary law practice. Customary law, however, had to be measured against the Covenant in the same way as statutory and common law were, despite any problems of implementation, persuasion or enforcement. In many countries, it was customary law that had the greatest force in practice.

17. With regard to the death penalty, the family of the executed criminal should at least be given the option of having the body returned for burial. There was surely no intention to inflict further pain on the family by denying them the opportunity to mourn at the graveside. As mistakes with the death penalty could not be corrected, the expectation of due process was exceptionally high. The fact that there was inadequate legal representation for condemned persons in capital cases was a good reason for suspending the death penalty, at least until that situation was remedied.

18. In the Committee's view, the principles of equality referred to sexual orientation as well as gender. Even if homosexuality was against the law in Botswana, homosexual practices inevitably occurred in prison and if the country was serious about combating HIV/AIDS, condoms would have to be made available there. Some prisoners were in a very vulnerable situation and might not have the option of refusing sex. Even Bishop Belo of Timor, although Catholic, had condoned the use of contraceptives for epidemiological reasons.

19. She asked whether there were any women among the *dikgosi* (traditional tribal leaders). As the State conferred juridical status on the *dikgosi*, it could ensure that women were allowed to participate, which was also a requirement under the Convention on the

Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Women were crucial to the economy, and acknowledgement of their leadership in politics could also have spillover effects on how they were treated in the home. It was therefore very important for Botswana that they participate in the exercise of customary traditional power.

20. **Sir Nigel Rodley** strongly urged the State party to reconsider the need for its reservation to article 7, paragraph 3, of the Covenant, for it did not do justice to Botswana's otherwise serious approach to its obligations. The reservation was shockingly wide for such a limited purpose; it fell foul of article 7, did not take account of the *ius cogens* nature of article 14, and would not protect Botswana in any case.

21. As concerned the death penalty, the useful figures given in paragraph 151 of the report, though inconsistent, indicated that on average there had been one execution per year. It should therefore not be hard for the delegation to provide more detailed statistics, such as the number of sentences and of actual executions year by year, which would then allow the Committee to assess the extent to which extenuating circumstances had been applied by the courts or judge the dimensions that had made some capital cases non-mitigable. He also wondered if the single commutation in 1975 (report, para. 153) had been the only application of the prerogative of mercy since 1966. The delegation had stated that Botswana envisaged abolition of the death penalty when the public was ready. That meant that it would never happen, for public opinion, everywhere, only followed political leadership. The death penalty used to be the norm in Africa but, from south to north, that had gradually changed, and Botswana now looked like an island of retention in a sea of abolition, hardly consistent with its good governance. If it was holding on to the death penalty because of its deterrent value, most studies, including those done by the United Nations, had disproved any deterrence. He urged the State party to give more reflection to the actual merits of capital punishment.

22. **Mr. Skelemani** (Botswana), observing that democracy and dogmatism were incompatible, said that he did not propose to defend a position simply because his Government had taken it. He had been impressed by the Committee's comments and appreciated the high purpose of the Covenant. There could still be honest differences, but the debate must continue, to mutual enlightenment, for Botswana was not interested in condemning its people to what was less than ideal.

23. His Government, noting that there was no definition of torture in the Covenant itself, had not made torture per se a crime. However, as the report suggested (para. 158), any severe physical or psychological maltreatment or unacceptable condition that could be considered an element of torture had, indeed, been made a crime under either the Penal Code or various pieces of legislation. None of those elements were labelled torture, but they were nonetheless proscribed. One must look at the individual statutes to know how Botswana was protecting those deprived of their liberty from ill treatment.

24. It had been an omission not to deal with human trafficking in the report. He believed it did exist, for arrests had been made, mainly in the east, on the border with South Africa. His Government was aware through INTERPOL and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) police chiefs that it was occurring and it was on the lookout for it.

25. The brevity of the initial replies to the list of issues was due to a misreading of the instructions. The delegation understood that it was essential to give the Committee as much truthful information as possible.

26. It was true that not all international treaties to which Botswana was a party had been incorporated into domestic law, as required by the Interpretation Act. That dual approach had been taken in part because it had not seemed necessary to give the force of law specifically to treaties that did not differ from Botswana's own Constitution.

27. It was clear that the Covenant bound a State party, and that neither customary nor common law could be exempted from that obligation. Botswana had therefore continued to amend or adapt legislation that would in the process modify aspects of the customary law — which was an unwritten law basically the same from tribe to tribe, although with nuances — but without making a public issue of the fact. Botswana had decided to take a gradualist approach to avoid provoking an uproar over interference with the rights of the communities; the dilemma in politics was always the management of conflicting desires of the people and of the international community. He asked the Committee to accept the fact that his Government was aware and wanted to move the people along.

28. For instance, in order to improve the status of women under customary law, and to give them property rights, Botswana had quietly made the acquisition of land available to every unmarried woman over the age of 18, and required men to show proof of their wives' consent before transferring land, and no one had contested that. The Government now needed, however, to encourage women to avail themselves of their rights and the rest would follow. It was also seeking to educate women not to accept polygamy, although in that area Botswanans themselves had realized that it was no longer financially practical to marry many wives and were themselves moving away from custom. The obvious inequality of the sexes under customary law would have to change, especially by enlightening the women themselves and the younger generation, which was already becoming less traditional.

29. The report was not up to date on the Marriage Act and the Matrimonial Causes Act (paras. 382 and 397): recent legislation had repealed the residency requirements for women filing for divorce before the High Court and made the legal capacity of women under common law equal to that of men. In the case of customary marriages, applications for divorce were made to the local chief, without going through the courts. One area, however, that was not properly regulated was cohabitation, and action still remained to be taken on a 2003 report on the question by a parliamentary committee. In all instances where customary and common law overlapped, there was no question that customary law would eventually have to be brought in line, and the touchstone would always be the Unity Dow judgement handed down in 1992 by the High Court (report, para. 104).

30. The office of the Ombudsman had been established because there had been too many complaints about badly administered government services. The Ombudsman acted independently and could investigate what he chose; and he had, indeed, challenged actions by the executive branch. A national human rights body would also be very useful, but it was not inexpensive to establish one and there would be no point in setting up an institution in name only. The time for such a move had to be right, and such a body should cover the gray areas not dealt with by the Ombudsman or the courts.

31. On the question of discrimination, sections 3 and 15 of the Constitution were indeed derogations from rights, but that did not mean that the Government had ever actually taken any such action depriving its people of basic rights. In the area of employment, there was no question that the Government wanted to promote the well-being of its own people before that of non-citizens in areas where there were enough Botswanan workers. The Government did, however, recognize that skilled refugees who had fled their own countries had to be allowed to have gainful employment in Botswana and help in running the economy.

32. The Government had not set up any courses to teach members of the judiciary or the police force about the provisions of the Covenant and other international human rights treaties, which in any case had to be applied because they were the law of the land. Courses, however, were available within the region, and Botswana would send as many of its judges and law enforcement officials as it could to attend them. Botswana itself had an excellent Police Academy open to all Africans, which was receiving international assistance and should eventually be in a position to set up human rights courses.

33. Turning to question 6 on same-sex relations, he said that their prohibition predated the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and citizens of Botswana opposed such relations on moral grounds. It was undeniable that the disease would be transmitted through the practice of sodomy if condoms were not provided to male prisoners. He acknowledged the contradiction between the Government's wish to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS and its refusal to make condoms available to prisoners.

34. Turning to question 7 on the death penalty, he noted that there had been many capital cases in Botswana's 42-year history. However, from 1973 onwards, dating back to his involvement with the courts, extenuating circumstances had been found in 99 per cent of cases and the courts had refused to impose the death penalty. As a result, few cases were brought before the Advisory Committee on the Prerogative of Mercy because once an extenuation was granted, cases could not be sent elsewhere. The quality of legal representation available to those sentenced to death remained an issue. There had been cases of lawyers who did not consult the client properly, and he wondered whether a higher fee would motivate an unprincipled lawyer to act ethically. It remained unclear whether the country's legal system would

allow convictions and death sentences without a thorough examination of the facts in cases involving well-trained judges and poor lawyers. Legal representation for the poor was available when individuals were charged with a criminal offence before the High Court. Pro deo counsel was granted in cases of potentially long sentences or the death penalty. The delegation had attempted to indicate how the Advisory Committee on the Prerogative of Mercy worked. It did not operate by seeking information not previously considered in the court, but rather by attempting to understand how the individual on trial could have committed the crime in question, without that understanding serving to justify the crime as such.

35. Turning to Botswana's reservation to article 7 of the Covenant, he noted that the purpose of section 7 (2) of the Constitution was to preserve the forms of punishment that had been lawful in the country before independence, including corporal punishment which he deemed preferable to imprisonment, as the latter created hardened criminals. He disagreed with those who believed that corporal punishment had no place in a civilized society. In his experience, it could be beneficial in moderation, since its purpose was to correct, never to kill. The issue of substituting community service for corporal punishment remained an open question. Jails in the country were currently full. Those who perceived corporal punishment as barbaric should understand it in the context of the particular society. However, future generations might take a different approach to the matter.

36. With regard to question 9, concerning complaints of ill treatment brought against police and prison staff, he wondered whether a Board of Enquiry could independently establish facts regarding a case of police brutality if there were police officials serving on that Board. He had been raised to believe that there were upright police officials who would deal with wayward ones. In a number of cases, police officials had been prosecuted for criminal offences. Nevertheless, there might be members of the Board who would try to protect rogue colleagues. In certain cases, independent investigators would be hired to work on cases. He understood the use of the word "normally" in paragraph 178 of the report to mean that complaints would be investigated and persons would be informed of their rights.

37. A copy of the Domestic Violence Bill would be made available to the Committee. The Bill had made considerable progress towards addressing not only physical assault but also the psychological trauma suffered by spouses. The conduct of some citizens of Botswana had left much to be desired and that had led to the unanimous adoption of the Bill. In order for it to be effective, it was critical that non-governmental organizations should educate people, particularly women from a customary law background who assumed that they were powerless because men were the head of the household, on their rights.

38. In the Botswana legal system, customary law was rendered void wherever it conflicted with common law. The Covenant was meant to cover all matters within the republic, and customary law could not be an exception. Furthermore, customary law was fluid in that it relied not on statutes but on the common understanding of the community — thus, if a particular provision was outdated, the community's behaviour was sufficient to change it. A more proactive leadership was required to amend customary law more rapidly.

39. The practice of ritual murders resulted from the belief of some citizens that removing human body parts while the victim was alive and mixing the parts with herbs would confer greater strength and privilege upon the person who ingested the mixture. He expressed his abhorrence of that cruel practice and was prepared to have any perpetrator of such crime hanged. On whether hanging served as a deterrent or just as revenge, he wondered who would avenge society if the living did not. Other forms of punishment, such as imprisonment of thieves, had not deterred others from perpetrating theft. While no study had been conducted on the deterrence value of executions, people in South Africa had been known to comment that the perpetrators of ritual murders in that country should be sent to Botswana to be hanged.

40. Referring to customary law, he said that, since it was applied to the majority of the population, it should be brought in line with all the country's treaty obligations. Jurisdiction in customary courts was by warrant, and they could try certain crimes but not others. Some found that customary courts sent too many people to prison.

41. In section 15 of the Constitution, it was stated that reference to persons as "he" meant both men and women, and new legislation used both male and female pronouns. In certain tribes, women could be chiefs, and women could be appointed to the House of Chiefs by

the President. Given the increasing involvement of women in all sectors of public life, it was quite conceivable that a woman could become president of Botswana.

42. The Chief Justice was responsible for the day-to-day running of the judiciary, ensuring that courts were built and magistrates appointed. As the Chief Justice was in charge of the judiciary, the position was higher in rank than that of the president of the Court of Appeals — combining both positions would require an amendment to the law.

43. **Mr. O'Flaherty** welcomed the delegation's admission that, like most countries, Botswana faced the problem of trafficking in persons and invited the delegation to provide additional information on how the Government was addressing the problem. Consideration should be given to ways of balancing a punitive approach to trafficking with a focus on the rights of the victims that would include the ministries with responsibility for social welfare and children.

44. He also welcomed the information that human rights training was being provided to the police and members of the judiciary. The Government might wish to approach the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) with a request for assistance, either directly or through the relevant national and regional bodies. The delegation had stated that the Government was willing to consider establishing a human rights commission but was concerned at the costs involved. Such an initiative, provided that it was pursued in accordance with international standards, was a worthwhile investment for a democracy and another area in which OHCHR might provide guidance.

45. Botswana's reservation to article 7 of the Covenant was worded so broadly and vaguely that it appeared to refer to an area of jus cogens, making it automatically void, and gave the impression that the Government was claiming the right to perpetrate torture with impunity. High priority should be given to withdrawing the reservation in order to remove an unnecessary stain on the nation's reputation.

46. **Mr. Iwasawa** said he took note of the delegation's statement that section 7 (1) (b) of the Matrimonial Causes Act had been repealed and that the Government was willing to review the criminalization of same-sex sexual activity.

47. The Covenant did not prohibit policies that made distinctions based on nationality, provided that the policies had a legitimate purpose and that the distinctions were proportionate thereto. However, section 15 (4) of the Constitution, which established that the prohibition of discrimination did not apply to non-citizens, constituted a violation of the Covenant. Many of that instrument's provisions applied to all people, regardless of their nationality; for example, article 7 stated: "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment".

48. **Mr. Amor** asked how many ritual murders had been reported during the past three years and whether the delegation believed that the actual number of such crimes was higher. The delegation had stated that the act was criminalized; he wondered how the media dealt with ritual murder and what the Government was doing to change the traditional attitudes that prompted it through awareness-raising campaigns, school curricula and training programmes.

49. **Mr. Skelemani** (Botswana) said that children were the primary victims of human trafficking, although women and men were also being trafficked across the country's eastern border. There was no national programme specifically targeting the problem, but police commissioners had been instructed to be on the alert for it. His Government would explore the possibility of assistance from OHCHR, including with a view to the establishment of a human rights commission.

50. He realized that Botswana's reservation to article 7 might be viewed as touching on a matter of jus cogens. However, it was his understanding that its withdrawal would require a prohibition of corporal punishment, which, although it had elements of torture, was an established and highly beneficial practice that kept people out of prison.

51. His delegation hoped to be able to provide the Committee with the text of the revised section of the Matrimonial Causes Act at the next meeting.

52. The exemption of non-citizens from the Constitution's prohibition against discrimination was meant to ensure that Botswana's citizens always came first in their own country. No government allowed non-citizens to compete with its citizens for scarce jobs.

53. He did not have statistics on the number of ritual murders during the previous three years, but there had been few such cases. One problem was that in the absence of clear proof that a murder had occurred, it was not a crime to be found in possession of human body parts. Moreover, many reports of such crimes were subsequently disproved. Even educated persons and Christians — including bishops — had been known to engage in ritual murder. No awareness-raising efforts were currently under way, but perhaps a focus on the younger generation would wean the population from the widespread belief in its efficacy.

54. **The Chairperson** invited the delegation to reply to questions 14 to 21 on the list of issues.

55. **Ms. Mogami** (Botwana), replying to questions 14 to 16, said that the President could appoint judges only on the basis of recommendations by the Judicial Service Commission, an independent body. Judges had full security of tenure under the Constitution and were subject to mandatory retirement at age 70. Their salaries were established by Parliament and could not be altered to their disadvantage during their service. They could be removed from office for inability to perform their functions, but only on the recommendation of a tribunal appointed by the President, which must include at least two current or former judicial officers. Judicial officers were immune from lawsuits by persons involved in cases over which they had presided. They had good pensions and received substantive perquisites and solid clerical and administrative support. All High Court judges were equal. They were ex officio members of the Court of Appeal and could be called upon to serve on it.

56. Indigent persons facing capital punishment were provided with high quality pro deo counsel; an ongoing study was considering the establishment of a legal aid system.

57. The Customary Courts Act listed the offences over which those courts had no jurisdiction, including, inter alia, treason, murder, bigamy, bribery, extortion and rape. Legal representation was not permitted because advocates were likely to complicate the proceedings by submitting arguments based on provisions of common law that were beyond the comprehension of the customary courts' presiding officers. However, individuals who wished to have legal representation could apply to the Customary Court of Appeal for transfer of their cases to the magistrates' court. If that request was refused, the individual could apply to the High Court, citing denial of the right to legal representation. Such transfers did occur, but only where the individuals concerned were aware of their rights in the matter. The legal process ran from the lower customary courts to the higher customary courts and thence to the Customary Court of Appeal. Further appeals lay with the High Court (a common law court) and the Court of Appeal, which was the supreme court of the land.

58. **Mr. Outlule** (Botswana), replying to questions 17 to 19 on the list of issues, said that Botswana had made considerable progress since its independence; it now had at least nine private newspapers, apart from the free official newspaper. Indeed, the newspapers had a wider circulation than the Government newspaper. The National Broadcasting Board had licensed three private radio stations in addition to the two public stations, Radio Botswana 1 and Radio Botswana 2. The nation's television station, GBCTV, had had financial problems but was now on a stable footing, and online news services functioned without Government interference.

59. Section 12 (1) of the Constitution governed freedom of expression. It covered the public and private media, which enjoyed a wide latitude of freedom provided that they did not violate the rights of others. In a 2001 legal case, the court had established that private newspapers and radio stations were free to express their views and had recognized that that freedom was vital in a democratic society. The court had ruled that the Government's withdrawal of advertising patronage from the applicant's newspapers amounted to infringement of their freedom of expression since the sole reason for that withdrawal was the Government's displeasure at what it perceived to be irresponsible reporting. Many of the nation's young journalists were quite forthright in expressing their views, yet no journalist had ever been barred from the profession under the Penal Code.

60. Botswana recognized two types of marriage. Because common law marriages were registered, it was easy for the authorities to verify that the minimum age of marriage was met. However, customary law marriages were not registered and followed the practices of the different ethnic groups. The Marriage Act was being amended in order to ensure that all marriages would be registered and that the ages of the prospective partners would be verified.

61. **Ms. Mogami** (Botswana), speaking in reply to question 20 on the list of issues, said that polygamy was prohibited under common law but condoned under customary law. The Government had not yet initiated debate with a view to a total ban on the practice. Unmarried women had full legal rights and their status had been improved through the 2004 adoption of the Abolition of Marital Power Act, which had abolished the common law principle of marital power and given spouses married in community of property an equal right to dispose of their joint assets. Guardianship of unmarried women was a cultural practice of many ethnic groups; the Government was monitoring the process of social transformation in that area.

62. **Mr. Mokgothu** (Botswana), replying to question 21 on the list of issues, said that Botswana's meagre public resources as a developing country must be allocated to high priority areas of direct value to the majority of its citizens. The Government considered that public funding of political parties would cause them to proliferate and would not benefit the general public in any way. However, that issue was still under discussion. Political parties had access to the public media, including print, radio and television. In most cases, a schedule was prepared in order to give as many parties as possible an opportunity to present their platforms to the public. There was wide and unprejudiced coverage of party activities during political campaigns.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.